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ABSTRACT

This publication contains current concepts, goals, and ideas relative to kindergarten education which district personnel in Illinois may wish to incorporate or reinforce in local kindergarten programs. Topics covered include (1) an introduction to the history, goals and orientation of kindergarten and the relation between kindergarten and child development; (2) education in the early childhood period (the home, nursery school, day care center, special needs programs, and primary school contexts); (3) kindergarten teaching approaches (the traditional kindergarten, the Montessori method, Behavior Analysis Programs, direct instruction, Piagetian programs); (4) kindergarten content (language arts, reading, mathematics, etc.); (5) planning and organizing the kindergarten (the beginning days, scheduling, learning centers, equipment and supplies); (6) program evaluation; (7) children with special needs; (8) working with parents and other personnel, and (9) the continuity between kindergarten and the primary grades. This revised edition of the 1970 publication of the same title was undertaken with the purpose of helping district personnel in Illinois reflect on their present programs and determine the focus of programs to be pursued in the decade of the 1980s. (Author/SS)

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Early Childhood Education in Illinois

Focus on Kindergarten

(Revised Edition)

1980

Illinois State Board of Education
Joseph M. Cronin, State Superintendent

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FOREWORD

Early Childhood Education in Illinois: Focus on Kindergarten was originally published in 1970 with the primary purpose of assisting school districts to plan and implement sound kindergarten programs in response to legislation which was approved by the Illinois General Assembly in 1970. This legislation mandated that all school districts provide programs for all boys and girls. As a result of this legislation, all districts now provide programs; however, there is much variation among them.

This revised version of Early Childhood Education in Illinois: Focus on Kindergarten was undertaken with the main purpose of helping district personnel to reflect on their present programs and to determine the focus programs should pursue in the decade of the 1980's. The publication contains current concepts, goals, and ideas relative to kindergarten education which district personnel may wish to incorporate or reinforce in local programs.

Successful educational programs for young children flourish best in an environment where boards of education, administrators, teachers, parents, and community citizens work cooperatively to develop and support programs.

It would be impossible to list all the people who have contributed to this publication. Special recognition must be given to Bernard Spodek, Ph.D., Professor of Early Childhood Education, University of Illinois, Urbana, who assumed primary responsibility for this revision.

The ultimate worth of this guide will be reflected in the girls and boys who participate in better educational experiences because of its use by school personnel.

Joseph M. Cronin

Joseph M. Cronin
State Superintendent of Education

INTRODUCTION

Since 1970, elementary schools in the state of Illinois have been required to provide kindergarten education for children before they entered the primary grades. This was not the beginning of kindergarten education in Illinois. Permissive legislation allowed school systems to offer kindergarten programs before that date. In many school systems which did not include kindergartens, parent associations sponsored self-supporting kindergarten classes which were housed in public school buildings. Private kindergartens also existed outside the public schools. Indeed, kindergartens were established in the state of Illinois prior to the twentieth century.

The history of kindergarten education is closely intertwined with that of other aspects of early childhood education. In the United States and elsewhere nursery schools, day care centers, kindergartens and primary classes have been interrelated at both a practical and theoretical level. Within the stage of early childhood, the period of the child's life up until the age of eight, education has been offered to young children in many ways through many agencies.

History of Kindergarten

Freidrich Froebel (1782-1852) has been characterized as the "father of the kindergarten" although others before him had devised programs for young children. His first kindergarten was established in Blankenburg, Germany in 1837 to serve children three through six. The program was based upon a mystical religious philosophy relating to the unity of man, God and nature. Froebel designed a program for children using gifts, three dimensional manipulative materials; occupations, (essentially arts and crafts activities); and a series of songs and games. Each activity symbolized the relationships that were so important to Froebel. The school was characterized as a garden for children because it was designed as a place to help children grow through careful nurturance.

Frobel's kindergarten came to the United States along with the wave of German immigration of the mid-nineteenth century. Mrs. Karl Schurz established the first American kindergarten in Watertown, Wisconsin in 1855. The first English speaking kindergarten followed in 1860 in Boston, under the sponsorship of Elizabeth Peabody. While kindergartens were introduced into the public schools in 1873 in St. Louis, it took almost a century for them to become a firmly established part of public education.

During this time the kindergarten itself became transformed from the mystical experience designed by Froebel to the kind of program we have today. Through the work of Patty Smith Hill and other progressive kindergarten educators, the content of the kindergarten program was changed. It began to more nearly reflect the current life of the child, using his experiences to achieve insights into areas of knowledge considered important by the community and the school.

The kindergarten still maintains a child-oriented program, building upon children's experiences to create significant knowledge. Some of the important ideas that have remained embedded in kindergarten education throughout its history include:

1. The concept of development as related to the education of the young child.
2. The use of self-activity as education.
3. The use of play as a form of child learning.

Goals of the Kindergarten

While there are a number of different kinds of programs that are found in kindergarten today, they all generally accept the same goals. These include supporting the child's development, providing an orientation to the world of schools, helping children develop knowledge about the physical and social world, developing physical, social and intellectual competence, and helping the child develop modes of self-expression.

Supporting Development

The kindergarten year is an important time for children to grow. The kindergarten program is designed to support that growth. Children need to be provided with experiences that will extend them and that will enable them to continue along their individual patterns of development. Since different children grow in different ways and at different rates, this requires that the kindergarten program be a highly individualized one.

Providing an Orientation to the World of Schools

For many children entrance into kindergarten is the first experience in school. Even those children who have attended a nursery school or day care center will find the elementary school a very different institution. The school is large. There are many people there, both young and older. There are specific places that children have to be at particular times. The adults in charge have to respond to the needs of a large group of children, rather than just to one or a few. There are different activities that children do in school. They play different roles than at home. They respond to others and are responded to in different ways. There are many expectations for kindergarten children that are new to them. The novelty of the school is not bad; most children can handle it easily. But this novelty can be puzzling. One of the important jobs the kindergarten must accomplish is to help young children become aware of this new (for them) institution -- the school -- and learn how to function within it.

Developing Knowledge about the Physical and Social World

Young children live in a world of things and people. The more they know about their surroundings, the more competent they become. Children need to be provided with experiences with people and things. Equally important are the opportunities to do something with these experiences, to organize per-

ceptions and impressions in order to create meaning. The basic concepts of mathematics, science, and social science come from these meanings. As young children understand their world, they develop ways of coping with it. With an increase in competence, children develop confidence and positive self-images that allow them to explore the world further and to test it without unnecessary fear.

Developing Physical, Social and Intellectual Competence

The kindergarten experience should do more than provide an increase in the number of facts the child knows or the repertoire of songs and games the child can perform. Through the various experiences provided, the child should be developing personal competence that can be applied in a range of situations. Fine muscle coordination improves along with large muscle co-ordination. This not only makes children more capable in their day-to-day operations, but also allows them to grasp a paint brush or pencil properly and draw the picture or write the word desired. Each child learns to get along better with others, become a productive member of a group, and respond appropriately to authority. The children also develop ways of thinking about and developing an understanding of themselves, of others and the world about them. As they move through the kindergarten, they increase their powers as persons and become more effective individuals.

Self-Expression

While school is often considered a place where children come to be filled with knowledge, what comes from the child is equally important. Children in the kindergarten have a number of ways in which they can express their ideas and feelings. Words are the most obvious means of expression. Kindergarten children are developing competency in using the spoken word, and some written expression can also begin at this time. Art, music and movement provide other forms of expression that are important to kindergarten children as well.

As children achieve competence in the various areas identified here, they grow as human beings and become more closely allied with the society which surrounds them. Increases in personal competency lead to a more positive self-concept. This also contributes to the healtny adjustments children make, growing up and becoming productive citizens.

The motto of Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts is Finis Origine Pendet - the end depends upon the beginning. This motto would be equally relevant for the kindergarten. This year of kindergarten education represents the beginning of formal education and of public schooling for most children. If we are concerned with the quality of education the child receives throughout his school career, we need to pay special attention to the kindergarten - the beginning of education. It becomes the foundation upon which the child's structure of knowledge and competency are built.

EDUCATION IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PERIOD

During the first eight years of life, the period of early childhood, there are a number of institutions that are available to provide education for the child: The kindergarten has an important place among these institutions, serving as a bridge between the home and other educational institutions which provide informal, indirect instruction and the primary grades where instruction becomes more formal and more direct. Because of its central role, the kindergarten creates the foundation upon which later educational achievement can be built.

The Home

A child's first educational experience is in the home. From the moment of birth the child encounters the physical and social world and develops a widening repertoire of behaviors as a result of environmental encounters and personal development. Language develops and most children have an extensive vocabulary before they enter school. They have also developed coping skills and learning patterns that determine their orientation to the outside world and to new learning.

While parents seldom instruct their young children directly, there is much that they do to support learning. They create an environment for learning in the home. They encourage children, explain things and set limits. They respond to their children's needs. They serve as educational "consultants and designers." They do all this while they continue to meet the many other role requirements of parents.

Nursery School

Nursery schools provide half-day educational programs for three and four-year-old children. The nursery school room may not look very different from a kindergarten. There will be activity centers designed to support a variety of children's activities. An outdoor play area adjacent to the classroom will provide opportunities for more active play when the weather allows. The nursery school schedule will be designed to provide a balance between physical and sedentary activities.

Traditionally, the nursery school has focused primarily on the support of socio-emotional development in children. Many nursery school programs go beyond this to provide activities to support language and intellectual growth. All programs concern themselves with developing physical competencies in children and helping them learn self-help skills.

Day Care Center

Day care centers provide full-day programs for children before kindergarten. A good day care center contains a nursery school program. It also functions to provide nurturance in a safe, supervised environment for children who need to be away from home for extended periods of time each

day. In addition to a nursery school program, children are provided food, including lunch, snacks and possibly other services. Opportunities are also provided for children to nap. Informal play activities may contribute to the total daily program.

Programs for Children with Special Needs

A number of new prekindergarten programs have been developed since the mid-sixties to serve children with special educational needs. Many of these programs have been designed to increase the probability of the child's success in school. Headstart is one of the oldest and best known of these programs.

The Headstart program was created in 1965 to serve children from poverty backgrounds. Often it provides a program similar to that of the nursery school. It also makes available to children and families health, nutritional and social services. Parent involvement is an important part of the Headstart program, and parents serve as aides in the classrooms as well as on policy and advisory committees. Within Headstart, programs have been developed which are based upon models of early childhood education derived from a variety of theories.

In some communities, programs for prekindergarten children have been developed in the public schools under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. These programs are similar in content and structure to the Headstart program.

Special prekindergarten programs for children of bilingual and bicultural backgrounds have been developed under a variety of auspices. These programs are designed to provide basic educational services for their enrollees. They pay particular attention to the cultural and language backgrounds of the children. Programs are designed to support the children's continued learning in their own language and culture. In addition, a number of different techniques are used to strengthen the children's language abilities in English and to teach aspects of American culture. A variety of bilingual bicultural program models are also available.

In recent years public schools in Illinois have been mandated to provide educational services for handicapped children from the age of three. These children are often identified through locally implemented screening procedures. The type of program developed depends on the particular handicapping conditions identified and should serve as the basis for a continued educational program throughout the school experience.

An increasing number of children are being served by educational programs before kindergarten. These children enter the kindergarten with a greater degree of sophistication about schooling than is often expected of them. They may have experienced similar classroom activities and educational procedures before. The kindergarten teacher needs to be aware of each child's background and prior educational history and should use this knowledge to build upon what children already know.

Primary Grades

Within an older tradition, formal schooling began with the early grades of the elementary school: the primary grades. Great stress was placed in these grades upon children learning basic academic skills; success in reading, writing and arithmetic represented success in school.

The basic skills continue to be of major concern in the primary grades. But we have learned that these academic skills represent much more than mechanical processes. Achievement in basic academic skills requires a depth of background and understandings that must be developed before formal lessons begin. Thus, the learnings of the primary grades are not the beginning of school learning, but the culmination of a history of learning begun in the home and continuing through a variety of possible programs into the primary grades.

It is this continuity of learning and schooling in the early childhood years that lays the foundation for later education. The kindergarten must serve as a bridge in this process if the early childhood experience is to develop its strength.

KINDERGARTEN APPROACHES

The last two decades represent an era of intense research and development activities in the field of early childhood education. This period can be characterized by the development of new ideas, as well as the refinement of older ideas, as to what are appropriate educational activities for young children. For example, numerous Montessori class methods have been established throughout our nation since 1960.

Montessori's approach to early childhood education dates back to the first decade of the twentieth century and thus cannot be considered new. But new, indeed, are many of the Planned Variations of the Headstart and Follow Through programs which were designed to provide more appropriate education for young children of poor and minority backgrounds. These variations include conceptions of early childhood curriculum based upon principles of behavior analysis theory, of Piagetian theory, and of psychoanalytic theory, as well as new forms of direct instruction and parent involvement. Some of these programs use knowledge derived from theories of child development that have only recently been generated. These new approaches to early childhood education represent alternatives to traditional kindergarten education.

While it is easy to state personal preferences for particular early childhood education approaches and to label them as "good" or "bad" for young children, this is generally not a productive exercise. Different programs are related to different beliefs about what children are like, how they learn, and what they should become. A strong program for kindergarten can be created as a result of selection from among the various approaches that are available.

The Traditional Kindergarten

Kindergarten programs have traditionally stressed the social, emotional and physical development of children as well as modes of expression and preparation for first grade. Play is viewed as a medium for social and emotional adjustment with activity centers created in the classroom to support dramatic play, as well as play with blocks, puzzles and table toys, and physical play. Outlets for expression were provided through art media, music and rhythm activities, and discussion times. The child's physical development was cared for through offering milk or juice each day and providing opportunities for rest.

More recently kindergartens have become concerned with the intellectual development of children. It has also been found that some of the traditional play activities influence children's intellectual and language development as well. As a result of this, traditional kindergartens, sometimes modified, are serving new purposes.

Montessori Method

The Montessori program has been characterized as the interaction of the child with a prepared environment under the guidance of a Montessori directress. A range of self-correcting materials are provided for the children to use in prescribed ways. These help to develop sensory motor skills and ways of organizing sensory perceptions. Exercises in practical life are also provided to help children develop skills in everyday living. Reading, writing and arithmetic are taught to the child from an early age through sensorial methods, with writing preceding reading.

In the Montessori program the directress guides but does not teach children directly. The children work individually with materials, selecting what they wish and working at their own pace. The atmosphere in the Montessori school is one of seriousness and respect for the child.

Behavior Analysis Program

A number of programs have been developed for young children based upon principles of applied behavior analysis. Often the goals of these programs relate to assumed prerequisites for success in the primary grades. Behavior analysis programs define their goals in terms of observable behaviors, rather than attitudes or predispositions. At the kindergarten level these include behaviors related to academic skills, as well as the social behaviors expected of children in school.

Behavior Analysis programs are structured so that children develop simple skills upon which they build more complex skills. The program is designed to eliminate extraneous or interfering activities, and children are helped to reach the behavorial goals set for them through a series of successive approximations. Reinforcers are regularly provided to the children for the successful completion of their work. These are managed so that all children can be rewarded. These reinforcers can be consumables, social reinforcers,

or play activities. Sometimes tokens are provided that the children can later trade for these rewards. When tokens are used, behavior analysis classroom schedules are often characterized by alternative periods for "working" and "spending."

Direct Instruction

Growing out of work on the educational problems of poor and minority group children, an approach to the education of young children has been generated that teaches the basic mechanics of academic skills in a direct manner. This approach is best characterized by the Englemann-Becker model of Follow Through and by the Distar material which resulted from that project.

In Distar, language, reading and arithmetic skills are broken down into specific sub-skills that are carefully sequenced and taught directly by verbal means through imitation, drill and association. The prime focus of this program is academic skills, with little attention given to social and emotional development, to higher order mental processes, or to academic areas outside the "three r's." Sometimes such a program of direct instruction is integrated with other approaches to kindergarten education.

Piagetian Programs

A number of early childhood programs have been developed based upon the theories of Jean Piaget, a developmental epistemologist concerned with the growth of knowledge and thinking in children. Piaget has identified a series of stages in intellectual development, which can provide guidelines for determining the ability of children to profit from particular educational experiences. He has also identified different kinds of intellectual knowledge each one of which is generated and validated in its own particular way.

Kindergarten age children are generally at the concrete level of development. While they can develop a logical understanding of their surrounding world, this has to be done through a series of encounters with concrete representations of ideas, out of which concepts could be generated. Otherwise, children may be able to repeat something told to them without fully grasping its meaning.

Piaget views knowledge as being constructed by each child as a result of actions based upon experiences. Ideas are abstracted from experiences and are organized into mental structures. New information is fitted into existing structures. If there is a conflict between what a child already knows and what he later learns, the scheme may have to be modified. The dual processes by which a person does this are called assimilation and accomodation.

Kindergarten programs based on a Piagetian view of cognitive development use many of the play activities of the traditional kindergarten. The child's encounters with knowledge in the physical, social and logical-mathematical realms have to be carefully planned and supported so that the child comes to

grips with ideas himself, learns to deal with and resolve intellectual conflict, and becomes an independent thinker in the process. Language and symbolic knowledge including reading, as well as cognitive knowledge, can be supported in this manner.

Choosing a Program

A few of the many approaches to kindergarten education have been presented here, and even those have been only briefly described. How does a teacher or a school select from among the many programs available?

One must understand that many aspects of kindergarten programs transcend any single model. All of the programs presented above can have a strong parent involvement component within them. All of them can be modified to greater or lesser degrees to make use of the different learning potentials within each community. All of the programs do support learning, but different kinds of learnings are supported to different degrees by each program.

One solution is to choose elements from each, combining these into an eclectic program, to achieve the best of all possible worlds. Unfortunately, conflicts and contradictions arise from such a selection that would cause one to raise questions about the integrity of the kindergarten program. While some elements of some programs can be combined with elements of others, selection and integration need to be done carefully. There must be a sense of the kind of kindergarten education the community and the school value. The kindergarten program also has to be carefully articulated with programs at the primary level so that the child's educational experiences are characterized by continuity throughout the years. This would suggest that careful study and selection from among alternatives based upon a reasoned view of what is possible and what is considered worthy characterize the development of kindergarten programs.

Ultimately, the selection and development of a kindergarten program, like other education programs, represent a statement of the values of the school and the community as well as some judgment as to the effectiveness of the program.

In developing a program, the following items should be considered:

- Is the program related to the needs and concerns of the community?
- Is the program consistent with the point of view of the rest of the school?
- Does the program allow children to develop language skills, thinking skills, and social skills? Does it provide a broad curriculum perspective?
- Does the program allow for individualization so that it is appropriate for each child?

- Does the program involve parents as well as children in teaching, learning, and decision-making processes?

No single curriculum nor program plan can or should be devised to meet the varying requirements of every community, school, teacher, or child. The ultimate responsibility for planning for each individual group resides with the kindergarten teacher. Many teachers will find it advisable to experiment and to evolve an adaptation of a program that serves the needs of children and the community. Teachers use their experiences, knowledge of teaching, and the steadily accumulating body of knowledge about children: how they grow and develop and the ways in which they learn about themselves and their rapidly expanding world.

The key to a dynamic program for young children is a creative, resourceful teacher with a zest for learning and living. The importance of actively involving parents, teacher-aides, and other adults within the community in planning and operating the kindergarten program must not be overlooked.

A good day for a kindergarten child needs to be vital, satisfying, and mind-stretching. He needs a program in which play is valued for its learning opportunities; there must be ample provision for time and equipment. He can grow best in an atmosphere in which uniqueness and originality are prized; one in which inquiry is valued; one in which creativity is welcomed and fostered. He responds least well to an environment in which there is an effort to force him into a pattern of stereotyped behavior.

Fortunately, most kindergartens insist upon children being active participants in the total learning process. No two children within this or any other age or developmental group are exactly alike. While we can observe many similarities in life-styles, thinking, and behavior, each child is a unique person whose particular needs should be met.

KINDERGARTEN CONTENT

The young child usually meets each new learning experience with curiosity, open-mindedness, and a sense of wonder. It is the responsibility of adults to keep this enthusiasm alive. Some children enter school with this enthusiasm already dulled. By encouraging these children, by providing them with personal support, by asking leading questions, and by making resources available to enlarge their horizons, the teacher can rekindle this enthusiasm for learning and encourage its growth. Asking "Why?" is basic to experimentation, exploration, and discovery. Searching for solutions to problems which may pose new ones strengthens children's confidence in their ability to trust their own ideas.

Basic learning drives and goals are revealed by the questions and conversations of children and can lead to significant curriculum planning. The teacher selects and pursues the interests of the children with the goal of

helping them to satisfy their needs for self-fulfillment. A balance in programs for young children is necessary, so that no one phase of development will be neglected nor overemphasized. The practice of forcing kindergarten children into first grade materials and structures inhibits natural learning drives and places undue pressures upon them.

Concepts are formed by acquiring bits of information which are then ordered by the individual into an organized pattern. Young children learn best when they are actively involved in first-hand experiences, when they can play-out or work-out an experience, and when activities are commensurate with their developmental needs. Young children make sense of what they know by talking about it and playing it out. Through listening to conversation and observing play, the teacher gains insight about each child as well as direction for curriculum planning.

In a desire to provide intellectual learnings for children, it is quite easy to value products and results and fail to stress the processes by which these learnings are achieved. Children need to explore and discover as well as be told about the world. They need opportunities to test concepts they develop and generalize from meaningful educational experiences.

The roots of the various content areas of school are established in the kindergarten. The language arts, mathematics, science, social studies and creative arts are all included. However, separate periods need not be set aside for each area, nor are formal lessons necessary. Broadly based learning activities can be designed that embody within them significant beginnings for each of these areas. While each area is discussed separately, they are intertwined in the activities of the classroom.

Language Arts

Each child arrives in kindergarten with his or her own vocabulary and basic language patterns that mirror past experiences. The kindergarten teacher begins to build learning experiences based on the speaking, listening, writing, and reading competencies of each child in a relaxed atmosphere. This environment provides an opportunity for the development of communication skills.

Some children come to school with a language background not shared by their teachers and significantly different from the language used in the school. Kindergarten teachers need to be respectful of language as well as cultural differences demonstrated in their children. The prevalence of a second language may complicate language learning in the kindergarten, and the teacher may feel the need for additional resources. Nevertheless, language is a crucial area of school learning, and all children must be helped to achieve greater competency in the language of the school.

The kindergarten language arts program has several goals. Children should be helped to improve their verbal communication skills. They should develop a rich language repertoire. As this repertoire evolves, the children learn

to use language to influence others and to be influenced by them. Personal satisfactions and aesthetic appreciations should also result from the program.

Listening and speaking experiences evolving from natural kindergarten experiences will increase each child's vocabulary and sense of language structure. These experiences should also increase the child's ability to discriminate sounds in our language and to verbalize experiences using an appropriate sequence. Young children can experience a stimulating, as well as productive, language arts program without formal structured periods of skill drill.

There are many exciting materials and activities to help each child develop skills and appreciations in the language arts. Some activities which contribute to the appropriate development of positive attitudes, appreciations and skill in language arts are:

Discussion sessions - Teachers have children talk to others in the class about things that have happened to them at home or in school. They can ask children to discuss and describe objects they have made or possess. Sharing ideas and feelings helps children develop oral skills and establishes a feeling of community in the class as well.

Dramatics - Informal creative dramatics where children act out the line of a story helps children to assimilate and interpret the stories they have heard. Puppet shows can also serve a similar purpose.

Listening to stories and poems - There is a wide range of excellent books, prose and poetry, available for young children. Children can be read stories and poems by teachers, aides, parents and older children. They could also listen to stories on records or tape cassettes. These stories can be repeated; books should be made available for children to browse through. Teachers could also tell stories, both made up ones and personal stories from real life.

Telling stories - Children can be encouraged to tell stories of their own. Sometimes they will be personal occurrences; at other times they will be the retelling of stories they have heard. Children can dictate stories for the teacher to write down or they might use a tape recorder and replay the story for the class at another time. Beginning experiences with reading and writing might also occur.

The teacher needs to exploit all subject matter areas to extend language learning for kindergarten children. Science activities, for example, require the child to carefully describe objects and events. Vocabulary can be extended, and children can become more careful in their use of language.

Engaging in dramatic play allows children to mimic the adult life they have observed. This is a form of symbolic activity which provides opportunities for conversation, listening, learning new words, clarifying the meaning of

words, and social amenities. The teacher's responsibility in extending the children's language skills must include:

- providing ideas worth communicating through trips, pictures, films, children interaction, contacts with other adults, recordings, books,
- extending and elaborating the children's language productions.

Reading

Not too many years ago the topic of reading instruction would not have been discussed in relationship to kindergarten programs. Yet, an understanding of the reading process and an understanding of principles of kindergarten education can be used to identify important elements of beginning reading instruction that can be fitted into a kindergarten program.

Care should be taken that kindergarten reading activities do not deteriorate into meaningless repetitious workbook exercises. A good reading program is embedded in a strong language arts program.

In order to benefit from later reading instruction, young children need to be competent in language usage. They must learn that the written language is a parallel system to the spoken language. They must learn to recognize printed words and discriminate the letters of the alphabet. They must learn the left-to-right principle. They must learn to listen to spoken words as whole units and to the component sounds within each word. They can then learn to relate these sounds to written letters. Most important, children must learn that print is meaningful.

There are many visual and auditory discrimination activities that can help the child in beginning reading instruction:

- puzzles, pegsets, beads and strings can all be used to help children develop visual discrimination skills,
- activities with letters which allow children to match or discriminate them, as well as tracing and copying letters,
- listening to music and to sounds in the environment, distinguishing the sounds of various musical instruments, or the sources of various sounds,
- playing with the sounds of language - rhyming, alliteration, etc.,
- using signs and labels for things in the room.

Children can begin to develop initial competence in the written language in much the same way as they develop initial competence in the spoken language. If kindergarten children are provided with manipulative letters, they can explore writing and reading, make up words by combining letters and play with the relationship between the letters and the sounds of words.

These letters can be commercially produced of wood or plastic, or can be made of cardboard by the teacher. It is not important that children spell words correctly with these letters. They can invent words based upon their embryonic understanding of word construction. Playing with words this way will lead to more formal reading activities.

Also important are the symbolic and language activities that help children understand symbols and meanings. Dramatic play is important as symbolic activity. Other important activities are:

- writing experience charts about the classes' activities,
- drawing pictures and talking about their content,
- using graphs and charts.

Most important are the children's experiences with books that help children see that meaning comes from the printed page. This can be helped by:

- reading stories to a single child or a small group of children so that they can see the words,
- moving a finger along the text as it is read,
- repeating familiar stories,
- asking children to anticipate words in stories they know,
- providing books with records or cassette tapes for children to use on their own.

A rich language repertoire can be developed in the kindergarten. It may be the best insurance for success in later formal reading instruction.

Mathematics

Young children have experienced the quantitative aspects of their world before kindergarten. They already have gained a range of mathematical skills.

Their mathematical knowledge is structured from their own actions and the logical sense of these actions. These children can be helped to continue to develop mathematical understandings in the kindergarten.

The focus of the kindergarten mathematics program includes such mental operations as classification -- grouping and separating objects by similarities and differences, judging quantities as to number and comparing quantities as "more," "less" and "same," as well as seriation -- ordering things according to a relative quantitative difference. Children can also be helped to develop a greater understanding of time and space in the kindergarten.

Kindergarten children can be offered activities that require them to group objects, compare the quantities among groups, and match corresponding objects.

- They can begin to learn to count meaningfully, using manipulative materials as they learn the names of numbers.

- They can begin to develop an understanding of number operations, that quantities can be put together and taken apart. An ability to conserve and reverse operations is required for this.

- They can begin to develop an understanding of geometry, of proximity, separation, order, enclosure and continuity, as well as size and shape.

Many mathematical concepts can be approached by children through experiences with concrete things. Measurement activities help. Measurement activities can begin with informal comparisons (more than, shorter, etc.) and move towards the use of more formal standard measures. Linear measurement, measurement of weight, volume and time can all be used.

A mathematics program should be a planned program. But it should also be designed to make use of incidents that arise in a kindergarten which allow children to deal with quantity and to practice mathematical operations. Thus snack time, preparation for activities, cooking and art construction, all provide the potential for children to learn mathematics.

Science

Most young children are enthralled with the wonders of nature. Many treasures are brought to school -- a colored leaf, a sparkling rock, or a wiggling worm. The function of an early childhood science program is to couple the child's sense of wonder with a sense of understanding. This is done, not simply by broadening the child's experiences with the world, but by abstracting knowledge from those experiences.

Young children must abstract information from their experiences and create concepts and understandings. They develop observational skills, focusing their observations on the useful aspects of their experiences. They learn to describe what they observe. They learn to compare observations of one phenomenon with those of another or with observations of the same phenomenon at different times. They learn to classify objects and identify processes. They learn to make tentative "best guesses" or hypotheses to explain what was observed and to test these hypotheses in simple ways. In short, young children learn science by acting as scientists, becoming more attuned to science as they mature, develop knowledge, and become more logical.

In order to help children do science, the teacher should bring in a variety of materials for the children to "mess around" with. Initial discoveries that result from experimentation could be expanded with information provided by the teacher. The program, however, should go beyond "nature study."

Science affords the child the opportunity to engage in a variety of activities. Each child should have time to experiment, to observe, to generalize, and to have the teacher help in recording the results. The science center should be a place where a child is able to take a cup of snow, let it melt, and measure the resulting water; or put objects in a small container of

water to see which will float and which will sink; or watch worms crawl in a transparent container to see how they move. This must be an area where a child looks, touches, smells, tastes, hears, and feels things.

Adequately planned field trips for a specific purpose enhance the program. They provide another data base and a source of observation from which children can abstract information they will use in their study. Resource people -- classmates, older children, parents and people from the community -- can make valuable contributions to the new kindergarten program.

Social Studies

Young children are attempting to understand their social as well as their physical world. As they move out of their homes, they become aware of the social processes in a variety of groups. They learn more about themselves in relation to others. They learn to fit into groups and derive satisfaction from group life. They learn about the ways that society has been organized to meet its various needs. They learn the traditions, heritages, and values of their own and other cultures.

Social studies programs in the kindergarten begin to provide children with learning experiences in all of these areas. Children are provided with basic knowledge. They should be given opportunities to think about social processes, to make generalizations and arrive at conclusions, and to develop positive attitudes, feelings and sensibilities about people and groups. From these activities, they can develop skills needed in finding out about, and representative of, the social world.

As children enter kindergarten they develop a further exposure to an ever expanding social world. They can be helped to understand the world and their place within it. Experience in the family is supplemented by experience in school, neighborhood and community. The children can be helped to understand the various institutions around them and the roles people play within these institutions.

The American heritage is introduced to children through a variety of holidays that give them a beginning sense of history. While they may not be able to place historical events in chronological order, they can learn the importance of the past to our developing present.

Actual objects from afar or representations of things as they were "long ago" help children develop this sense of history.

Dramatic play in the kindergarten helps children understand their social world and their place within it. Acting out events in dramatic play or using block constructions to represent observed situations helps children organize their thoughts, represent their ideas and test their understandings on an appropriate scale.

The basic premises of democratic living have their roots in a child's first experiences in school. Kindergarten is a place where children of different

cultural and ethnic backgrounds come together to work and play. Children bring with them a part of their past experience. Children learn from each other. Human beings have more "likenesses in common" than differences. It is necessary that a teacher become sensitive to and understanding of these relationships in order to impart to young children the basic concepts of democratic living.

Expressive Arts

Art is a medium through which young children can express their ideas and feelings in nonverbal form. Young children need opportunities to create with paints, clay, play dough, cutting, pasting, collage construction, and simple wood work. For them, the process is far more important than the product. The wise kindergarten teacher will give art an important place in the program. He or she will ensure the necessary freedom for experimentation in the different media. If children are given many interesting experiences, they are likely to approach art media with imagination and ever-increasing skill.

Young people go through a number of stages in the use of various art media. Children's first attempts are manipulative and experimental. Accidental, and later, intentional design usually characterizes the next stage.

Symbolic/semi-abstract is descriptive of art work which has meaningful content for the child artist, but is not yet recognizable to the adult. Such forms may be preplanned, or more likely, named and renamed after rendering. Sometimes, as in painting, there is a running monologue which accompanies the action. In time, the child will reach a more realistic stage of representation.

Esthetic exposure is also a valuable aspect of art in the kindergarten classroom. Toys, colorful prints, furniture, and other classroom objects should be selected with awareness of their esthetic qualities, as well as their educational function.

Music should be an integral part of every child's kindergarten experience. Appreciation, sheer enjoyment, and the first steps in attaining musical competencies, deserve a daily time for music with some attention to sequential development.

Young children begin to sing in a limited-range pattern. Most can successfully match three or four adjacent tones somewhere between middle C and A above. As singing ability develops, the lower range increases somewhat, and songs with five to seven adjacent tones may be selected. A few more competent and mature young singers may progress to an expanded range of seven or more adjacent tones.

Songs with repetitive patterns and phrases are particularly attractive to the young singers. At first, they may listen to the teacher or to a recording artist present the song. Shy beginners can usually be encouraged to join in on a catchy, repetitive refrain.

Teachers can personalize songs by using names of the children in greetings, references to familiar things, and new words to fit special occasions. They should also encourage children to sing spontaneously, to play simple instruments, and to express their feeling for rhythm through creative body movement.

Listening, as well as being the key to tuneful singing, is the core component of all musical experience. It is important that teachers develop in children an awareness to the many sounds around them by listening to such things as the pitter-patter of the rain, the high and low tones on the piano, the fast-slow, even-uneven bouncing of a ball, and the loud and soft sounds of bells. Listening is emphasized when children hear a story or are exposed to recorded music.

Kindergarten pupils enjoy singing. It does not matter if some of the singers do not sing "in tune." They will improve with practice.

Chanting the words and clapping the rhythm will make learning the song easier. Making up new words to a certain rhythm or melody is great fun. Children delight in moving to music -- they like to skip, gallop, march, jump, walk, or tiptoe. Songs, poems, chants, and musical stories offer many opportunities for movement and dramatization. Kindergarten children need lots of space in which to move.

Basic instruments for use in kindergarten are tom-toms, triangles, tambourines, rhythm sticks, wood blocks, jingle bells, melody bells, and coconut shells. An autoharp and/or piano is essential for playing accompaniments.

Kindergarten teachers set the stage for creativity when they accept and encourage the individual responses and creative ideas of children.

Play Activities in the Kindergarten

Since its beginning, play has been an important component of kindergarten education. The various subject areas discussed here can be approached through play. The role of the teacher is to know the subject areas and be clear about program goals, set up play activities, and modify the spontaneous play activities of the children so that children's play serves a worthwhile educational purpose.

One normally finds four kinds of educational play in the kindergarten: manipulative play, physical play, dramatic play and games.

In manipulative play the children work with relatively small objects, often at tables. The activities are fairly self-contained and the program goals are achieved directly through the child's use of the materials. Work with puzzles, small blocks, pegsets, construction materials, such as Lego, mathematics materials and Montessori materials are a part of manipulative play. Often natural materials, such as sand and water along with appropriate containers, shovels, etc., can serve important educational purposes.

Physical play involves children's large muscle activity. Provision should be made to meet the need for developing large muscles and motor control.

The room should be large and should provide for vigorous physical activities. Rolling, skipping, somersaulting, hopping, walking on the balance beam, and jumping are physical activities which can be performed indoors when necessary. Bean bags and medium-to-large-sized balls give children practice in throwing and catching. Creative movement activities provide other opportunities to improve body movement.

Running, climbing, crawling, riding toys with wheels, and all sorts of vigorous activities can be conducted outdoors. Space should also be provided for dramatic play and gardening.

Dramatic play requires that the child assume and act out a role. These may be roles the children see in their home or ones the child observes in the larger adult community. Teachers can guide such play with minimal interference. They should provide simple costumes and props to move the play along. Providing children with additional information through books, visual aids, field trips or the use of resource persons will increase the educational content of dramatic play.

Games present another form of play for the kindergarten. They should be reasonably uncomplicated with simple rules that children can follow. Some games require mainly thinking skills, while others require physical skills. A range of games should be used.

Using play allows the teacher to integrate the various learning areas in the kindergarten. It also makes use of the natural predispositions of young children to learn through actions. It can also add a quality of playfulness and spontaneity into the classroom.

PLANNING AND ORGANIZING THE KINDERGARTEN

Creating a kindergarten program for a particular group of children is a complex task. It requires an understanding of the goals of kindergarten education, of the abilities of the children to be educated and of the potential learning opportunities inherent in various activities and materials that can be made available.

The kindergarten teacher needs to provide and orchestrate resources to insure that each child's learning needs are met. Time, space, physical resources, and human resources are all used in developing the kindergarten program.

Time is an important resource for the kindergarten. Most programs operate on a half-day basis, limiting the time available. In addition, children are developing at a rapid rate during the kindergarten year. What a teacher

must do at the beginning of the year is far different than what that teacher is able to do at the end of the year. Special attention must be given to children during the first few weeks of kindergarten in order that their introduction to the formalized educational program will be positive.

The Beginning Days of School

The introduction to school will be a responsibility shared with parents. Parents need to feel reassured that the child is going to have a good school experience. Many schools hold a parent meeting prior to the beginning of the year, at which the school staff is introduced, and the tentative outline of the school year and the basic structure of the school day are presented. Specific problems and needs are discussed. Such topics as clothing, trips, snacks and lunches, health regulations, school policy, parent conferences, and transportation may be of interest to both parents and teacher.

The sturdiest five-year-old may find any new experience away from home and family emotionally and physically trying. For this reason, the first days of school must be carefully planned. Some schools allow small groups of children to attend for part of a session before meeting the entire group. Others have part of the group attend on successive days during the first week. Still another plan uses a gradual introduction of children, starting with a small group and adding a few more each day.

In spite of careful preparation and planning, a few children may find the first day of school so emotionally upsetting that it is wise to ask the mother to stay in the classroom or in the building. The child who knows a parent is near at hand will not feel deserted or rejected. If an occasional five-year-old needs to sit by a parent while observing the other children for the first hour or so, the teacher is wise to invite the parent to stay until the child feels comfortable.

On these first days the simplest activities are set up and ready for the child. Some of them will be familiar to even the novice kindergartner, while others will be new and challenging. Some of these will reflect the home environment, while others will point toward the new world of school.

A good school beginning is the first step in developing desirable home-school relationships. Constant interpretation of the program and a continuous conversation with parents are necessary to maintain a good school program. Reevaluation of goals and adjustment to the emerging needs of the children give direction to the program throughout the year.

Scheduling

A schedule allocates time for each day's activities. Activities are organized in large blocks of time and alternative activities may be made available. Time needs to be used so that a balanced program is presented:

- First-hand experiences balanced by vicarious experiences.
- Exploration and discovery balanced by teacher-directed activities.

- Individual and small group activities balanced by class activities.
- Expressive activities balanced by receptive activities.
- Vigorous activities balanced by less active activities.
- Outdoor activities balanced by indoor activities.

The schedule should provide a balance among the four phases of development -- physical, social, emotional and intellectual. This balance is not achieved by giving equal weight to each, but by appropriately weighing each in the planning of activities.

Some schools have kindergarten children coming each day for a full day. Other schools have them coming alternate days a week for a similar full day's program. Most schools still have the children coming daily for a half-day program.

These sample schedules are designed to show balance of activities and blocks of time. Teachers will vary their daily schedule within these according to school facilities and requirements and according to needs of their children, including nutritional requirements and the increase in maturity during the year. In addition, schedules should be modified to accommodate new learning opportunities that occur.

Sample Half-Day Program

8:25 - 8:55 a.m.	Teacher planning and preparation
8:55 - 9:00 a.m.	Arrival time
9:00 - 10:00 a.m.	Activity period
	This is the foundation of the kindergarten program. Children engage in activities within the learning centers using the materials designed for stimulating intellectual development, such as engaging in dramatic play or choosing an available art or craft activity. Many activities are going on at the same time. Often, if supervision is available, there can be both indoor and outdoor activities simultaneously.
	This time can also be used for trips or for developing activities directed toward a unit of interest. Special trips may take an entire morning.
	The teacher may give individual instruction, work with small groups during this time, or supervise the entire classroom.
10:00 - 10:10 a.m.	Clean up, evaluation and planning.
	The children discuss what they have accomplished and plan for the following day.

10:10 - 10:30 a.m.	Toileting, looking at books, and snacks. (When toilet facilities are a part of the classroom unit, a special time allotment will not be necessary.) Rest needs will usually be met by a change of pace.
10:30 - 11:00 a.m.	Music and creative rhythm; story and poetry. When weather prohibits outdoor play, these activities and others may be extended to dismissal time.
11:00 - 11:25 a.m.	Outdoor play.
11:30 a.m.	Dismissal.
11:30 - 11:45 a.m.	Teacher clean-up and evaluation.

These time blocks may be used for an afternoon kindergarten schedule, but their order may need adaptation.

A Sample Program for an All-Day Session

Some districts may have all-day kindergarten sessions. Extended outdoor play, lunch and snacks, and an adequate rest period are important features of the longer day.

8:50 - 9:50 a.m.	Activity period and clean up.
9:50 - 10:20 a.m.	Group meetings, sharing period, planning.
10:20 - 10:40 a.m.	Snack.
10:40 - 11:00 a.m.	Music, creative rhythm, or creative dramatics.
11:00 - 12:00 a.m.	Outdoor play.
12:00 - 1:30 p.m.	Lunch and rest.
1:30 - 2:00 p.m.	Individual quiet activities or small group story as children awaken.
2:00 - 2:30 p.m.	Creative rhythms, games, story.
2:30 - 3:20 p.m.	Outdoor play.
3:20 - 3:30 p.m.	Dismissal.

When all-day programs meet only part of the week, it is important that activities be designed without too much carry-over from session to session.

Learning Centers

The kindergarten room is often arranged into learning centers with materials organized for any center of interest.

In locating centers in a classroom, careful consideration is given to:

- Availability of supervision.
- Availability of water where it is needed.
- Accessibility to materials.
- Arrangement of traffic patterns to protect activities and help individuals and small groups learn to concentrate.
- Availability of adequate lighting.

Many centers are set up for use during the entire school year. Others are created on a temporary basis to be used for short periods of time. The materials in each center will be constantly varied by the teacher with new items being added while others are removed.

The maturity of the children, the previous use children have made of the center, the time of year, and the specific emphasis the teacher wishes to make at a particular time will determine which centers are added to those which are ongoing. None of the centers is likely to include all of the suggested equipment and supplies at any one time, but teachers should have a vast store of supplies available.

The following centers and materials are suggested.

Library Center

Picture and story books displayed on bookracks in an inviting way, flannel boards, sets of pictures, and materials for display.

Tape recorder, earphones, recorded stories and poetry (commercially or teacher-produced) are suggested multimedia materials which encourage listening and responding.

Music Center

Autoharp, ukulele, melody bells, sticks, triangles, maracas, tambourines, drums, a record player and records, colored scarves for dancing.

Art Center

Easels, brown wrapping paper, newsprint, manila paper, construction paper, crepe paper, tissue paper, large brushes, tempera paint, finger paint, playdough, chalk, crayons, scotch tape and paste. Many other materials which stimulate children's inventive drives should also be included.

Indoor and Outdoor Large Muscle Center

Climbers, rope ladders, light-weight ladders, balance beams, sawhorse, cleated boards, sand and water tables, toys (including containers for measuring, molding, pouring, and sifting), tricycles, wagons, garden tools, wheelbarrows, packing boxes, large drain tile, balls, a slide, butterfly net. (This center may be set up indoors or outdoors depending on space and weather.)

Woodworking Center

Workbench with vise, soft wood in various dimensions, hammer and saw, nails (large head), wood file, sandpaper. Other tools can be added as children become more competent.

Manipulative Materials Center

Puzzles, picture lotto games, picture domino cards, Lego blocks, hammer-nail sets, landscape pegboards, viewers, primer typewriter, matching games, manuscript alphabet, magnetic letters, parquetry blocks, number games, abacus, number sorter, measuring instruments, calendar, boards of geometric shapes, flannel board with cut-outs.

Science Center

Seeds, acorns, leaves, bugs (a bug cage made from two 10" cake pans and a yard of screening), rocks, fossils, shells, magnifying glass, prism, magnets, batteries, battery lights, electric bells, balance scales, aquarium, terrarium, animal cages.

Block-Construction Center

Unit blocks, hollow blocks and/or interlocking blocks, and forms. Block accessories including farm and road equipment toys, airplanes, rockets, mounted steering wheel, farm and animal figures, and family figures can be used.

Toys that can be used in a number of ways are preferable.

Dramatic Play Center

This center should support family life play and other kinds of dramatic play. Dress-up clothing for men and women, kitchen equipment and furniture, as well as telephones, dolls and clothing, brief cases, tools, cash register, stethoscope and other props for playing a range of social roles.

Equipment and Supplies

Because of the nature of their programs, kindergarten classrooms need to be stocked with a variety of resource materials. Many of these materials can

be purchased from educational supply houses; others can be purchased locally in supermarkets. Many materials can be gathered locally, often with the help of parents.

Teachers need to be careful in selecting materials and equipment for their classrooms. Among the criteria to be used are: 1. cost in relationship to use, 2. quality and durability, 3. flexibility of use, 4. appropriateness to the program and, most important, 5. safety.

In recent years a number of kits of educational material have become available for kindergarten use. These kits, because they offer complete sets of materials for a class along with manuals for teachers' use, are often viewed as an effective way to provide resources. Care needs to be taken that kits, if purchased, are imaginative, offer open-ended educational opportunities, are not stereotyped, and offer good value for their cost. Teachers also need to be careful that kits do not impose a particular structure on the entire classroom. Persons who develop kits should provide evidence that they teach what they promise.

Kindergarten teachers can collect useful materials locally. Assorted boxes, cans, plastic containers of all types, spools, sponges, old purses, hats, high heeled shoes, and other bits of usable discards can become important ingredients for a project.

Unclaimed items in lost and found centers may be useful to the school program. Teachers can ask for discarded boxes and useful items at stores and shops; children and parents may be the richest resources of worthwhile material.

The kindergarten teacher with the assistance of parents and other volunteers can create or collect many educational materials. Blocks may be made by carefully and precisely measuring, cutting, sanding, and finishing lengths of wood; uncooked macaroni, sand, feathers, buttons, bits of ribbon or cloth may be used for collage as may wallpaper books, construction paper scraps, or pictures for scrapbooks. Old socks can become hand puppets or bean bags. Inner tubing and large cans may be used to construct tom-toms and drums, while pop bottle tops are used for counting games or play money. Old jewelry can be provided for dress-up or collage, while plastic containers can be used for housekeeping, water and sand play, and/or storage of small items.

Discarded materials offer many possibilities for creative ideas and activities. With them, children have opportunities for working with familiar items and for developing appreciation of the multiple usage of materials. Collecting can provide a working bond between parents, the children, and the teacher. The exchange of materials and ideas may be endless.

The use of appropriate equipment and materials, wisely chosen by teachers and administrators, can foster important educational objectives of resourcefulness, creativity, responsibility, independence, and intellectual, social, and motor skills.

EVALUATION OF PROGRAM

The teacher should frequently ask: Do we have a good program for young children? Are we meeting their needs? Are we assisting each child to develop a healthy self-concept? Are we fostering positive feelings and attitudes? Are we expanding their learning? To answer these questions teachers need to periodically assess the program they provide in the kindergarten.

At different times, a community will assign different priorities to the goals of kindergarten education. At one time, adjustment to school may be considered the most important goal, while at another time academic readiness may be considered of primary importance.

Teachers can review their goals and the program plans they make to insure that their short-term goals are consistent with the school's long-term objectives. They can also determine if the program being implemented reflects the established plans and provides the necessary program balance.

Teachers can analyze the way they organize their classrooms to determine if the facilities are bright and attractive and if they encourage children to learn and explore. Kindergarten rooms should be organized to support the classroom atmosphere and learning conditions the teacher wishes to establish. Teachers should judge whether their rooms contain diverse areas in which materials are available for children to serve themselves.

Teachers can evaluate themselves. They can become self-reflective, periodically analyzing their own actions as teachers, assessing whether they are continually supportive of children and whether their daily interactions in the kindergarten help children become more comfortable with themselves and the school and more capable as persons and as students.

Evaluating Kindergarten Outcomes

The teacher is continuously observing and evaluating the growth and behavior of each child. This evaluation is important in planning and selecting learning experiences throughout the year.

Informal assessment techniques can be used by the teacher to collect information about each child's progress and to make judgments about the kinds of experiences that should be provided. Teachers need to understand program goals for each child. They also need to know whether goals are developmentally appropriate for each child.

Based upon the goals of the program and the activities provided in class, the teacher may develop observation scales and check lists to aid observation. Such observational tools should be used to make observations of children more practical for the busy teacher. They can simplify the process by substituting a checkmark for a narrative description. Other forms of

data collection, ranging from collecting anecdotal records to using formal or informal tests, are useful as well.

Teachers often find it helpful to sit down after a kindergarten session and make notes on a few of the children. Over time these anecdotal records can provide a profile of each child in the classroom.

Standardized and teacher-made tests might also be used in the kindergarten. Teachers need to be aware of the limitations of tests for providing a valid and reliable evaluation of a child. Such tests, however, provide information in addition to that which the teacher collects in her observations. They should be used to augment, not substitute for, the knowledge the teacher develops of the children through regular classroom contact.

Kindergarten teachers will differ on the degree of specificity that evaluative devices should have. There is agreement, however, in the feeling that the more the teacher knows about each child, the better she can match activities and goals to the particular child. Information gathered about the program and the children should be used in planning learning activities for them and in using resources. It can also serve as the basis for parent conferences.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Any kindergarten classroom may be expected to include children having a wide range of mental and physical abilities, personality and behavior patterns, and characteristics. There may be one or more children who are readily identifiable because of special abilities, or lack of them, because of physical limitations as sight or hearing, or because of emotional or psychological difficulties.

There has been a concerted effort to identify handicapped children and provide educational services for them from the age of three onward. In addition, other children with handicapping conditions are discovered upon entrance to school. Many of these children will be provided with programs. Many new and interesting programs for mentally retarded children, the speech handicapped child, those with orthopedic conditions, the blind and partially sighted, and the deaf and hard of hearing have been developed. These include programs with teams of nursery/kindergarten and special teachers; some programs in both urban and rural areas use home visiting teachers who work with parents and children prior to school enrollment.

More and more children with special needs are being educated within regular classrooms. A variety of programs have been designed to provide for these children in the normal kindergarten. Resource personnel, crisis intervention teachers, and consultants can provide the teacher with help. Children may be taken from the classroom for special work beyond the capability of the regular teacher. Additional materials and supplies may be needed.

There are a number of things kindergarten teachers must learn in order to work effectively with these children. They must have a thorough knowledge of child growth and development and the nature of exceptionalities. They will need to know some basic techniques for educating exceptional children. They will need to learn how to work as a member of a team. They will also need to become increasingly sensitive to the needs of all the children in the class.

No single plan works best for all kindergarten teachers or all children, but some suggestions may be helpful. Opportunities to experience success in any area, exposure to special activities or equipment on a structured or informal basis, or the widening or narrowing of limits, may be among those techniques which will be most effective.

Care should be taken to limit the number of exceptional children in a single group. There should be some evidence, after a reasonable length of time, that the exceptional child is able to profit from the experience without requiring an unreasonable amount of teacher time and without otherwise detracting markedly from the quality of the experience of the other children in the class.

The presence of an exceptional child in the classroom may be a rewarding experience for teachers and children. Sensitivity to the differences and the feelings of other children and learning how to help them are among the important outcomes to be valued.

WORKING WITH PARENTS

The importance of cooperation between parents and school personnel has long been recognized. Such cooperation can lead to a stronger program in the kindergarten, as well as greater cooperation and support in the community. A good kindergarten emerges and survives only in a climate of public opinion based upon the understanding of the philosophy of early education, and how, in the long run, it can contribute to a child's total growth pattern.

A vital part of a parent-teacher relationship rests on reporting to parents about their children. Parents expect to know how their children are progressing in school. Clear written statements, either in the form of checklists or report card or a letter is helpful. Parent conferences are also effective in reporting, interpreting and clarifying such reports. When a conference is well-planned, and there is mutual sharing of information about the child, the result can be beneficial to the parents, the teachers, and the child.

Released time for conferences provides opportunity for the teacher to present carefully recorded information, to share the child's work, to exchange ideas about the child, and to plan for the child's continued growth. Informal contacts with parents can augment these formal conferences; parent

meetings are also useful. Initial meetings often take place prior to the child's entrance to school and serve to provide orientation to the school and class. Regular meetings during the year help parents understand what takes place in the kindergarten and why these activities are important. Parent visits to the kindergarten class also serve this purpose.

Some kindergarten programs include a parent education component. This was true of the early kindergartens. Parents can be helped to learn more about parenting and child rearing, about child development, about working with children at home or in the kindergarten, or about other topics of interest related to the kindergarten. Often someone other than the kindergarten teacher assumes responsibility for leading parent education programs.

Much of the content of parent education programs can be developed through parents participating in the kindergarten class. Such participation has the advantage of making resources available to the kindergarten beyond those of the teacher. The role of the parent as a contributing member of the educational team is still quite new to many, and meaningful participation is not always easy in the initial stages. Some suggestions of ways in which parents can help are:

- Assisting during special learning experiences in the classroom (such as making soup).
- Sharing homes or backyards for the culmination of a neighborhood walk.
- Accompanying the class on a study trip.
- Acting as resource persons for special studies and holidays.
- Sharing skills and hobbies such as carpentry, sewing, music, or photography.
- Assisting as room mothers.

In communities where there have been early childhood education programs with genuine parent participation, the children have profited from knowing that the home and school are working toward a common objective. A true partnership can be achieved in a framework of mutual acceptance, respect, and trust.

WORKING WITH OTHER PERSONNEL

The kindergarten teacher, while often working alone, has to interact with many other persons in providing appropriate education for the children in the kindergarten class. Each requires a special set of relationships.

Principal

The elementary principal has the prime responsibility for the educational program in his school as well as for the administration of the building. Kindergarten teachers can help principals keep informed on current research and practices in early childhood education. They can involve principals in

work with parents. They can help principals see the role of the kindergarten in the continuing educational development of each child.

Principals should be able to provide the instructional materials, equipment and physical facilities necessary to conduct an effective kindergarten program. They can help design a program of continuous professional development and inservice education relevant to all teachers. They can strive for continuity of the program while insuring developmental appropriateness at all levels. They can ensure that special resources are available, including access to school nurse, psychologist, speech therapist, social worker and others.

Teacher Aides

In some cases kindergarten teachers will have a teacher aide assigned to the class. These aides are usually technically trained; many have some background in classroom practice. The aide works under the supervision of the teacher and, in many ways, serves as an extension of the teacher who has the ultimate responsibility for and makes the major decisions about classroom activities.

Aides can function in a variety of capacities in the classroom, well beyond just cleaning up. They can be involved in instruction and can provide support for a variety of interactions with children. They often have a different view of individual children and can serve as an important source of information, helping the teacher with planning.

Anytime two or more people work together, good human relations become important. Teachers and aides need to communicate with one another. Their actions in the classroom need to be coordinated. Each can contribute to planning and evaluation and support greater individualization.

Ancillary Staff

A number of staff members in the school can help kindergarten teachers in providing for their children. The school nurse, psychologist and social worker are often involved in assessment and in providing services to children and their families outside the classroom. Special teachers, speech therapists and others may work directly with the children, sometimes in the classroom and sometimes taking the children out of the classroom. Care should be taken that children are not overwhelmed by services or taken out of the classroom in such a way that they are deprived of necessary educational experiences. The teacher should be able to orchestrate the services provided to kindergarten children.

Resource Persons

Many non-educators in the community can be used in providing a broad range of experiences for the kindergarten. Workers in the community, persons with various hobbies, parents, retired persons can all make a contribution. It

is helpful for the kindergarten teacher to survey the community and compile a list of resource persons who would be willing to work with children.

Resource persons should be oriented to the kindergarten class. They should know what to expect from the class and what will be expected of them. They represent one way of extending the abilities and talent of the kindergarten teacher.

ARTICULATION BETWEEN KINDERGARTEN AND PRIMARY GRADES

The early childhood program needs to be carefully planned to provide a continuum in early childhood education, beginning with prekindergarten and kindergarten classes and extending through the primary grades. Kindergarten and first grade teachers need opportunities to communicate and plan for articulation. Each needs to know, often through direct observation, what is happening at the other's level of education.

Educators must perceive children as individuals having different rates of development, different styles of operating in a classroom, and different educational needs. Diagnosing needs at the individual level, and providing for identified needs, would limit the concern for articulation, for child differences and child expectations would replace grade expectations. Artificial lines of demarcation should be eliminated, and children allowed to progress along a continuum unfettered by labels segregating kindergarten activities from primary activities.

INFORMATION FOR KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

Information about early childhood education can be sought from the following organizations:

Association for Childhood Education International
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20016

American Montessori Society, Inc.
175 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10010

Black Child Development Institute, Inc.
1463 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, Virginia 22091

Child Welfare League of America, Inc.
67 Irving Place
New York, New York 10010

Day Care and Child Development Council of America, Inc.
622 14th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

Educational Resources Information Center in Early Childhood Education (ERIC/ECE)
College of Education
University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois 61801

National Association for the Education of Young Children
1834 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009

National Council of Organizations for Children and Youth
1910 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

Parent Cooperative Preschools International
9111 Alton Parkway
Silver Springs, Maryland 20910

Southern Association for Children Under Six
Box 5403, Brady Station
Little Rock, Arkansas 72205

These groups may publish books or journals and hold conferences and workshops which can be helpful to the kindergarten teacher. Some of these groups have local affiliates or branches which can be contacted for immediate support.

Selecting Equipment

A number of guides for the selection of equipment for early childhood education are available. These include lists in textbooks and pamphlets. Some useful lists are found in the following materials:

Association for Childhood Education International, Selecting Educational Equipment for School and Home. Washington, D.C.: Association for Childhood Education International, 1976.

Evans, Anne Marie, "How to Equip and Supply Your Prekindergarten Classrooms," in Early Childhood Education Rediscovered, ed. Joe L. Frost. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968, pp. 567-76.

Foster, Josephine and Headley, Neith, Education in the Kindergarten, 3rd ed. New York: American Book Co., 1969, chapter 7.

Heffernan, Helen, Todd, and Vivian E., The Kindergarten Teacher. Boston: D. C. Heath, 1960, pp. 59-65.

Project Headstart, Equipment and Supplies: Guidelines for Administrators and Teachers in Child Development Centers. Washington, D.C.: Office of Economic Opportunity, n.d.

Books for Children

Any kindergarten class should have a good stock of well-written and well-illustrated books for children. Collections of stories, or anthologies, even when not illustrated, are also useful. Teachers can get help in selecting books from other teachers and supervisors, librarians, and local colleges and universities. In addition, several printed resources are available to help teachers select books. These include:

Best Books for Children. New York: R. R. Bowker.

Bibliography of Books for Children. Washington, D.C.: Association for Childhood Education International.

Books for Children. Chicago: American Library Association, n.d.

Eaken, Mary K., Good Books for Children (3rd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.

Guilfoile, Elizabeth, Books for Beginning Readers. Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1962.

Larrick, Nancy, A Parent's Guide to Children's Reading (rev.). Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday, 1964.

Reid, Virginia M., Reading Ladders for Human Relations (5th ed.). Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1972.

Rollins, Charlemae H., We Build Together (3rd ed.). Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1967.

Songbooks for Young Children

Dietz, Betty W., and T. C. Parks, Folk Songs of China, Japan, and Korea. New York: John Day, 1964.

Fowke, Edith, Sally Go Round the Sun. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1969.

Glazer, Tom, Eye Winker Tom Tinker Chin Chopper: Fifty Musical Fingerplays. Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday, 1973.

Jenkins, Ella, The Ella Jenkins Song Book for Children. New York: Oak Publications, 1969.

Landeck, Beatrice, Songs to Grow On. New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1950.

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Langstaff, Nancy, and John Langstaff, Jim Along, Josie. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970.

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Sendak, Maurice, Maurice Sendak's Really Rosie: Starring the Nutshell Kids. New York: Harper and Row, 1975.

Winn, Marie, The Fireside Book of Children's Songs. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966.

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Cass, Joan E., Helping Children Learn Through Play. New York: Schocken Books, 1973.

Cohen, Dorothy H. and Marguerita Rudolph, Kindergarten and Early Schooling. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1977.

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Hirsch, Elizabeth S. (ed.), The Block Book. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1974.

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Leeper, Sarah H., Ruth J. Dales, Dora S. Skipper and Ralph L. Witherspoon. Good Schools for Young Children (3rd ed.) New York: Macmillian Publishing Co., 1974.

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Payne, Joseph N. (ed.), Mathematics Learning in Early Childhood, 37th Yearbook. Reston, Virginia: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1976.

Pile, Naomi F., Art Experiences for Young Children. New York: The Macmillian Co., 1973.

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Russell, Joan, Creative Dance in the Primary School. London: Macdonald and Evans, 1965.

Safford, Phillip, Teaching Young Children with Special Needs. St. Louis: C. V. Mosby Co., 1978.

Schickedanz, Judith A., Mary E. York, Ida S. Stewart and Doris White, Strategies for Teaching Young Children. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1977.

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Spodek, Bernard, Teaching in the Early Years (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1978.

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Tough, Joan, Talking, Thinking, Growing: Language with Young Children. New York: Schocken Books, 1974.

Waters, Barbara S., Science Can Be Elementary: Discovery-Action Programs for K-3. New York: Citation Press, 1973.

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